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The City Mysteries: Crime, Vice, and Sin Revealed Through Space

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Abstract

This thesis is a spatial examination of the metropolis within three novels of the city mysteries genre. These works depict the rapidly expanding cities of Europe and America in the early 19th century and are noted for revealing the high levels of crime, vice, and sin throughout society. The architectural and inhabited space of these cities was used by the writers to inform their characters and ideas and through these same means an analysis will be made of their fictional urban environments. An exploration will be made, through the moral space of a Victorian home to determine how the authors envisioned the feasibility of a normative self-regulating subject living in these aberrant urban settings.

The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space. And, however much one may be aware that this isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking is the fundamental principle of our society everywhere, it is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious as just here in the crowding of this great city. The dissolution of mankind into monads, of each which one has a separate principle and a separate purpose, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme.

– Friedrich Engels, "The Great Towns" London, 1840

Introduction

In the early 19th century Paris, London, and New York were among the first cities to inspire a new literary genre, the city mysteries. These popular novels depicted rapidly expanding cities and their turbulent mix of socio-economic classes, criminal activity, and unhinged moral depravity. The three representative novels of the genre examined here are *The Mysteries of Paris*, (1842-3) by Eugene Sue, *City Crimes*, (1849) by George Thompson, and *Bleak House*, (1852-1853) by Charles Dickens. These authors did not provide a view of their respective cities from elevated heights as that only offers a distant "fiction of knowledge," but instead from the streets, enabling the "thicks and thins of an urban text" to be read (Certeau 92, 93). The cities they explored were too complex for observation by casual strollers who are unable to see beyond the visible because much of what is essential to a city lies "below the thresholds at which visibility begins" (Certeau 93). By unfolding the recesses of modern urban space, the city mysteries novels exposed the behavior of a populace subjected to the pressures of living in a transformative era.

The dark urban spaces portrayed in the city mysteries genre often resemble experiments with animals in concentrated quarters wherein normative behavior is skewed. Women are openly and highly sexualized, men are vicious, and deviance becomes the norm. In the Victorian era women were expected to create ordered, caring households as barricades against the chaotic

outer world but rarely are such examples found here. The male protagonists use disguise to readily move from normative to aberrant spheres, the ease of which speaks to the tenuousness of their division. While society is constantly shifting at street level, the criminal habitat of sewers and deep holes in the ground are permanently anchored and systemic to the city. These yawning rifts wait for pigs in the street to stumble down and be eaten or for souls to tumble from grace to join the other waste, sewage, impoverished, perverts, and criminals of the city - all discarded, flushed. The lives lived aboveground shift in their morality, redemption, and shades of purgatory while the underground darkness forever accepts the wretched and the dead.

There is little room for a character to willfully survive the urban environment of the city mysteries genre in which deviant behavior is encouraged. The intent of this thesis is to explore three city mystery novels to determine how their authors envisioned the feasibility of such a normative self-regulating subject in this corruptive environment. As architectural and inhabited space was a critical medium used by city mystery authors to shape and define their characters and ideas, so too will these means be used to conduct the analysis for this thesis. The first segment of this work, Where Space Meets Body and Soul, is devoted to the relationship held between space and the body and soul, the philosophical encounter with these in *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard and *Human space* and "Lived-Space" by O. F. Bollnow, and an account of the defining ideas behind Victorian domesticity and home. The second segment, City Mysteries Genre, will introduce the historical backdrop and public perceptions related to the problems of regulating behavior in the urban space of the city mysteries genre and how they are translated into the novels. The idea of the regulating normative space within a Victorian home will be used as the model for determining the possibilities offered for its survival in the urban environment. In the third segment, Cities Through Space, a spatial reading will be made on *City*

Crimes, *The Mysteries of Paris*, and *Bleak House* to reveal how each author incorporates crime, vice, and sin through space to illustrate their isolating and detrimental effects on the idea of home.

Novel Summaries

George Thompson used the thematic line of the urban mysteries genre in *City Crimes* by introducing multithreaded plots that revolve around the "criminal underworlds, urban squalor, and elite luxury and decadence" of New York City and Boston (Denning 85). The plots are essentially a series of adventures in which "nearly all the characters introduced [are] more or less tainted with crime" and are ultimately linked to the protagonist, Frank Sydney (Thompson 273). Sydney is a single, white man who has "health, youth, good looks" and a large inheritance that enables him to live in "elegant apartments at a fashionable hotel" in New York (107). He decides to disperse his wealth across these cities while fighting injustice but Sydney is not so much of a moral force as he is a bored man who impulsively shares an unearned fortune. This becomes clear during his first venture by succumbing to the charms of a teenage prostitute. Thompson morally tarnishes his protagonist in order to fulfill the running commentary in the novel of his professed desire to "depict human nature *as it is* not *as it should be*," with special attention devoted to "the frailties and passions of humanity" (Thompson 112,111). Through the wealth and wandering, philanthropic spirit of Sydney, Thompson introduces readers to the affluent, impoverished and criminal segments of society. Often wearing disguises, Sydney glides from mansions to hovels to subterranean caverns where some of the most depraved acts in the city are committed. Most of the descriptions are saved for the spaces allotted to criminals as they offer the reader access to places they would never see or otherwise imagine.

The Mysteries of Paris is the story of Rudolph de Gerolstein, a German prince who is reunited with his lost daughter, Fleur-de-Marie and the adventurous parallel plots that run through and under the troubled streets of Paris. Eugene Sue uses Rudolph as a tour guide for middle class readers to safely observe the city poor, criminal, and morally depraved and for the underclass to empathize with characters they might recognize in their own lives. As a German prince who has access to aristocratic and wealthy venues he exposes and proves that corruption is found at all levels of society. It is recognized as the first novel of the city mysteries genre and was published serially in a Parisian newspaper through 147 chapters of sensational suspense and relief. The series became so popular that French poet and author, Théophile Gautier proclaimed that "nearly all of France was occupied for more than a year with the adventures of Prince Rodolphe before going about its work" (Allen 168). This popularity soon led to translations made in Germany, Great Britain and America and authors from these countries and France emulated and adapted the genre to urban settings experiencing their own unrest.

The two major threads that run through *Bleak House* are that of the Court of Chancery through which lengthy streams of litigation entangle generations of families and of the intrigues lying behind the relationship between Lady Dedlock and Esther Summerson. The two plots are connected by a lost child theme, similar to that found in *The Mysteries of Paris*, with Summerson involved in both. Dickens also has a wealthy, roving philanthropist in John Jarndyce, who is more staid than Rudolphe de Gerolstein and Frank Sydney as he does not lead readers to horrific sites or fight crime. The entry of *Bleak House* into the genre of city mysteries is not seamless. Like most city mysteries novels it contains simultaneous plots that reflect the troubles associated with a rapidly expanding urban environment and exposes the criminal and immoral elements that exist at every level of society. Where *Bleak House* differs is in the absence of sensational and

excessive physical violence and prurience, for the majority of those who die or suffer deprivation do so through institutional strangulation. The actions taken by the Court of Chancery, political, and aristocratic bodies appear benign as they are slow and within legal bounds but these selfsame qualities make them all the more insidious and brutal. Some of these differences can be attributed to the superior literary abilities of Dickens when compared to most city mysteries authors and perhaps to a more sophisticated readership. For while the novel is generally considered to be within the genre, unlike Sue and Thompson, Dickens "[deals] in a more controlled version of the city [whereby]…*Bleak House* is *The Mysteries of London* with enhanced middle-class values" (Knight 11).

Where Space Meets Body and Soul

The relationship held between space and the human body and its soul[1] is represented by the reactions people have to their environments. In a city the configuration and concentration of people, ideas, bustle, and emotion create an anxious, threatening atmosphere that engenders a corresponding reaction in the private space of its inhabitants. Those prone to normative habits and orderliness resist or escape the clamor surrounding their homes through excessive order or neurotic fixations that mark their interior lives and space. Non-normative individuals enjoy the public chaos and welcome it into their homes, comforted by the similarity it bears to their character. This phenomenon of a surrounding environment triggering reflexive reactions in habits and interior space is exacerbated by the reciprocating and reinforcing influences between character and space. There is no comprehensive relief afforded people of either normative or aberrant character who form small boroughs to buffer the chaotic atmosphere or police action

[1] The theorists referenced in this work consider the idea of a soul to be relevant under such permutations as spirit, core, character, quintessence, etc.

because a city is an interconnect organism that resembles an expanded house. The inverse example of an urban setting is a placid backdrop surrounding ones dwelling, such as in a harmonious community or bucolic setting. The rural citizens are more relaxed relative to their urban cousins and unless they are naturally compulsive, the interior of their homes reflect this ease with nonchalance. This environment makes those of aberrant character feel anxious and they either retain their space by suppressing their nature and habits or rebel and are punished or expelled from the community space. These disparate examples do not address the prevalent blend of character that exists in either environment. The normative and aberrant character of most people is measured in degrees and this mix is also exhibited through their habits and both are reflected and reinforced by the nature of their dwelling space.

Relationship between Space and Soul

Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space* and O. F. Bollnow, in "Lived- Space" and *Human space* draw correlations between the relationship shared between an architectural space and its inhabitants and that held between a body and its soul. Believing the primary benefit of a house is to "[shelter] daydreaming," Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space*, makes an analysis of this "topography of our intimate being" (Bachelard 6, xxxvi). Bollnow is also a phenomenologist who, in his essay "Lived-Space," writes that a house is "the spatial center of the life of the individual" that is "[carved] out of chaotic space," a place "in which he realizes his true essence" (Bollnow 33, 34).

Bachelard and Bollnow agree that a relationship exists between a house and those dwelling within and the body and soul. Bollnow writes that depending on the disposition of a person, space can be felt and can "[bind] him to the surrounding world" and simultaneously to the "movements of the soul" (Bollnow 38). Through the protection that a house affords and the

resultant relief of anxiety, a person is able to "return to himself," which Bollnow considers to be the "highest function of the house" (33). In *Human space*, he finds that the character of an inhabitant and that of its dwelling space imprint themselves upon one another and that the nature of the inhabitant and its transformation is affected by "the nature of [its] environment (275). He cites an example of this phenomenon from writer and poet, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry who writes, "The women themselves became quiet or demanding or timid, according to the part of the house in which they happened to be" (275). This reciprocity can also be found between a house and an impoverished tenant. The body and house begin to resemble one another with the cyclical despondence and neglect of the house that comes with living in squalor. Vacant eyes match windowless frames, each of their bodies sag, the pate of each is bowed, they both shiver in the wind and frames without doors imitate toothless yawns. Several great thinkers concur with Bollnow in his belief that the perception of space is influenced by emotion, such as how fear and depression constrict space while in their absence, the "world spreads out" (Bollnow "Lived-Space" 38). Friedrich Nietzsche notes that when one is in an ecstatic state, "immense distances are scanned" (38). Philosopher and mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg wrote that an angelic essence can create "space by selfless devotion" and Rilke wrote that "lovers continually generate space…for each other" (39).

Bachelard finds a similar reciprocity between a house and body and the soul in that when a house faces a storm, it "acquires the physical and moral energy of a human body" (Bachelard 46). A house is primarily a geometrical structure yet, an "inhabited space transcends geometrical space" and a "house that has been experienced is not an inert box" (47). The shelter a house offers a body enlivens it, just as a seed that is " protected by the fruit's mass" is itself "the generator of vital heat" (Bachelard 151). While these assertions appear as metaphors forcing "the

being of a house into human values,….phenomenology of the imagination…demands…that images be lived directly" (47). A house can used to analyze the human soul with which one can learn to live "within ourselves" because "our soul is an abode" for memories, even forgotten ones, of the intimacy associated with a house(s) and these house images are "in us as much as we are in them" (xxxvii).

"The security of the house"

In the third chapter of *Human space*, O. F. Bollnow explains the need humans have for a center to their world, the confirmatory findings of Gaston Bachelard, the rationale for the security of a home, the mythology and homeliness of the home, and the significance of structural features. These theories clarify the inescapable bond that exists between humans and space and how the idea of security plays one of the most important roles in forming the relationship between them. This philosophical interpretation of space and body will segue into the history and nineteenth-century creation of domesticity, a concept comprised of "a profound attachment: a state of mind as well as a physical orientation" (Tosh 4).

The house as centre of the world

The relationship between humanity and space evolved as discoveries were made of the world at large and the significance of dwellings and dwelling transcended the fundamental needs of the body. As "man cannot live in this world alone" there has always been a need to venture out, requiring reference to "the place of residence of one's people" as the recognized center (119). The loss of an objective center through the discovery of other continents and by countries forming internal central points of references has not diminished the centrality of the experienced lives of individuals, with the home remaining "the concrete centre of the world" (119). A highly

subjective idea of centrality has replaced the mythological connection to an objective central space, which potentially threatens one into"[becoming] an eternal fugitive in the world that impinges menacingly" (120). Bollnow wishes to reveal that this threat (historically mythological and contemporarily existential in nature) tasks "man…to find a center for his space" which is required for "the fulfillment of his nature" and that he must create, occupy, and "defend it against all external attacks" (120). To provide security for a house, ownership is not enough as "one's inner relationship with it" is also required (120).

Dwelling

Dwelling is the way in which humanity lives in its household space, "in a particular place…rooted in it and [belonging] to it" (121). It is through the experience of dwelling and the knowledge that all people dwell that one fulfills their true nature and "human nature as a whole is determined by dwelling" (122). Through the German etymology of the word "dwell" Bollnow finds that the place in which one resides is primarily a space developed to rebuff enemies and secondarily a place in which to reside for a lengthy period of time. With such demands placed upon a residence, one must deliberately root oneself into a specific place for the stability necessary to assert oneself against even time, "which destroys everything" (123). In order to fulfill the secondary meaning for dwelling, staying in a space where one is at ease, the space "demands a certain expansion" in which one is "able to move" (124).

Space and security

In order for a house to be stable, secure and a place where one can dwell leisurely, it must be appropriately secured. The house must have walls and a roof strong enough to allow a person the freedom of movement and to "be at peace with himself" (124). Walls carve out a private

space from that which is public, separating the two, with the outer space devoted to activity and is marked by "insecurity,…danger and vulnerability" which are reasons for the existence of an inner space where one can be relieved of the unrelenting stress of standing guard (125). It is this relief of tension, this proffered peace that "is the supreme task of the house" (125).

Bachelard on the joy of dwelling

Bollnow corroborates his philosophical arguments with those of Gaston Bachelard in *Poetics of space*. Bachelard believes that a house primarily exists to provide protection and shelter in that it "forms an ordered sphere in itself, in which the chaos of the world outside is defeated" (127). The house offers a consistent stability in life as "its councils of continuity are unceasing [and]….without it, man would be a dispersed being" (127). The security of the house allows one to daydream in peace and through this daydreaming one can trace our first dwelling experiences in the house of our parents. These daydreams "intensify to become a primeval image of the house" and this "primeval sense of life transmitted by the house to man is…feeling at ease in a state of security" (127, 128). The ability of the house to resist the forces of nature are symbolic of human life and the fortifying nature of the exterior of the house gives one the resolve to proclaim that "I will be an inhabitant of the world, in spite of the world" (129). The geometric qualities of a house are transcended by the emotional qualities of dwelling within them, so "that a house that has been experienced is not an inert box [and]…. inhabited space transcends geometrical space" (129).

Sacred Space

The house has the character of a sacred place. One can feel this through the slight trepidation one has when crossing into the property of strangers or the defensive feeling one has

when somebody trespasses upon property one owns. Philosopher Van der Leeuw believes that "house and temple are essentially one" because both originate as sacred structures (134). A religious person finds that "some parts of space are qualitatively different from others," an idea that harkens back to the mythological period of humanity. Even within a secular person this remains as a vestigial, primeval idea for as historian of religion and philosopher, Mircea Eliade notes, "profane existence is never found in the pure state" (135). There is also a recognized profane space that is "homogeneous and unstructured" with the homogeneity not referencing a uniformity but instead, the radical difference between sacred and profane spaces (135). Such places in space are recognized by their power as either sacred or profane and people either "[seek] it or [avoid] it, [attempt] to strengthen or enfeeble it" and among those places avoided are the "uncanny [and] squalid" (136).

The homeliness of the dwelling

Beyond the basic utility of structured space providing shelter and protection, it is in the dwelling space of a house that homeliness plays a particular role. The interior of a house has a special character that conveys the effort made to make it comfortable and more homelike when compared to such structures as churches and concert halls. Bollnow lists several architectural features that a sense of homeliness requires. The space must "give the impression of seclusion" (143). This requires windows that are not too large, with curtains hung - rooms that are not too large or small but of a size that can "be filled up by the life of the person dwelling there"- furnishings that do not crowd nor are too spare and are inviting and express the individual living there and an historical accumulation of character – temperature controlled – wall color that is bright and warm – an order that is neither overly disarrayed nor too strict, as the former is disquieting and the latter stifling – signs of a person actually living there i.e. books, etc.- ideally,

the presence of a woman within a family or a couple, makes a big difference in the feeling of intimacy – in order for a home to truly be a dwelling-house, a harmonious family must live there – the atmosphere of intimacy attained by a home with a family that is inviting to close friends "captures us in its spell…transforms us" and guides us back to ourselves (146).

Door and window

The door

Preventing a house from becoming a prison the door with a lock has a "semi-permeable character" in its ability to allow inhabitants to leave at will and to admit only those who are welcome (147). When locking ones door while inside one "positively experiences [one's] freedom" as he reserves the right to open the door for any possible reason that one chooses (147).

The lock

The lock designates our weakness and our fear of what might enter our homes, our distrust in humanity, while it is also used to admit those who are welcome. The need for security may have "become so sublimated" that rather than it stemming from the idea of protecting oneself from external threats, it has become a protection of the "interior, intimate sphere of life" (149).

The window

Besides admitting sunlight, the window also allows the option, like a door spy hole, for an inhabitant to observe the outside world and those who approach without being seen (if dark inside). Unlike a spy hole, a large window allows one to orient oneself with the outer world, become part of it, and experience a certain freedom. This ability to orientate oneself through a

window is the inverse of what one feels in underground rooms where one feels "trapped, constrained" (152).

The Victorian "Home"

In the 18th century, before the idea of domesticity and the Victorian home took root, the social life of men often revolved around the activities found in coffee houses, where he "smoked, dined, wrote letters, discussed politics and literature, and got drunk," among other men. (Houghton 341-342). By 1830 John Stuart Mill notes that with a social change that dissuaded these course habits during leisure and with a new sense of "the reciprocity of duty which binds the husband and wife," men were drawn to the home for their "personal and social pleasures" (342). Domesticity became the norm of the Victorian age due in part to the impressions made by the Evangelical revival, the time required to raise larger families (due to lower infant mortality rates, sustained ignorance of contraceptives, improved medical and sanitation measures) and a greater concentration upon working to attain higher social status (342). Beyond these practical reasons "the very *idea* of family life was invested" in the model of the home as the space in which virtue could be sustained, separate and "radically different from the surrounding world" (343). While first embraced "by the bourgeoisie, domesticity…became the goal of the conventional good life" for every socioeconomic class, except for the "bohemian and the very poor" and was "socially…inconceivable without large-scale urbanization" (Tosh 4). The reason this idyllic vision of domesticity is untenable in the lower socioeconomic sphere is because the houses lacked security and the households were without the resources to order an interior space as unruly as that found outside.

According to the social thinker and author, John Ruskin, the nature of the Victorian home is one of a shelter from "terror, doubt and division" and it ceases to be a home if parents allow "the inconsistently-minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world" to enter, for it is a "sacred" place (Houghton 343). As it was the outer world did enter into the Victorian home in the form of dust, soot, and dirt, which permeated the urban atmosphere, seeped into houses and compelled relentless cleaning. This porosity of the house is primarily unidirectional, and in the urban environment it not only admitted the residue of the outer world that clings to returning husbands and air and water borne pollution and disease, but the potential entry of criminals. The principle reason for the existence of a physically and psychically secure dwelling is to provide relief from the anxieties associated with exterior space and for its inhabitants to feel simply human.

The cleaning and ordering of homes had religious undertones as "order in heaven [dictates] order on earth" and by maintaining the domestic space, one "[demonstrates] control over personal passions and societal flux" (McDannell 59). Another habit expressing religious belief was thrift, with Victorians saving and reusing all they could, rebuffing the wantonness of the public spheres and asserting an appreciation for all that providence bestowed upon them. A reinforcing cycle developed between these daily habits and the spiritual character of inhabitants as the corrupting influences of commercial interests degraded traditional beliefs.

Victorian domesticity was partially a response to "the damage which entrepreneurial capitalism had wrought on the fabric of human relations" (Tosh 31). The competitive world of business was one of the sources of anxiety in the outer world as men felt less human in an alienating atmosphere in which profit was made at the expense of others, breaking down the interrelatedness felt between individuals. This sentiment was shared by those working in the

lower socioeconomic levels, whereby returning home from arduous work, a peaceful environment allows one to slip back into the essential self lost in dehumanizing labor.

The spatial reflection of cushioning the interior of the middle-class Victorian house and buffering it from the external world can be found in the décor (for those who could afford it) of heavy curtains, lush carpets and selective furnishings. To meet the growing expectations for advancing socially, a piano was commonly found in homes of the growing middle class and the "library…best bedroom…[and] drawing room were designed to impress the visitor" (24 Tosh). The influence of the Evangelical movement made an impression upon the configuration of homes in its belief that every member of the family should have a bedroom in which to express their "religious devotions in private" (38).

The sanctity of the home was a direct representative transference from the church, with advantages given to households containing a father, wife and children, with specific assumptions made of women to attend well to the "everyday relations and duties of the family" (347). Women were considered physically weaker but morally superior to men so they counterbalanced the moral taint of the public sphere that men entered and also ensured that future generations would retain the same normative values. The secular equivalent for a family, although drawing from different sources of inspiration could, as John Mill writes, extol "sympathy, tenderness, and a loving forgiveness of self," all of which might extend from the home to "the human race and the future of civilization" (347).

The environment portrayed within the city mysteries novels is not fertile ground for the desires that John Mill had for extending the ideas behind the middle-class Victorian home beyond the threshold of urban households. The dearth of houses containing evidence of these ideals and the contaminated public spaces prevents this from occurring very often. The three

novels within this study vary considerably in the portrayal of their respective cities and the strict Victorian model of a home and its inhabitants helps hold their differences in sharp relief.

City Mysteries Genre

By writing *The Mysteries of Paris* in 1842-3 Eugène Sue inadvertently created a new literary genre, the city mysteries. Borrowing motifs from gothic, romance, detective and mystery novels, the genre distinguishes itself with the inclusion of several parallel plots of criminal activity, institutional neglect, and authors asserting the authenticity of their tales (Knight 10). The genre became popular with authors around the globe and among others that closely following the lead of Sue were *The Mysteries of London* (1846) by George Reynolds and *The Quaker City* (1844-5) by George Lippard. The last novel of the genre is in dispute, with *The Mysteries of Melbourn* (1873) by Donald Cameron cited by Stephen Knight while Anne Humpherys believes *The Mysteries of Modern London* (1906) by George R. Sims could be considered (Knight 5 Humpherys 456). Qualifying this belief, Humpherys notes that the "clearest expression [of the genre] corresponds to the consolidation of economic and political power in the big cities," which occurred from the "mid-1830s to the mid-1850s" (456). Among the critical reviews that have been written, Karl Marx read into the ideological significance of the genre as one that "[figured] the world of the capitalist city to its artisan readers," finding that "the dreams of the utopian socialists haunt [their] pages" (Denning 86). Edgar Allan Poe published an essay on *The Mysteries of Paris* in which he describes the work as powerful but the writing unsubtle and its intrusive protagonist unbelievable. A more recent interpretive essay by Edward R. Tannenbaum finds that *The Mysteries of Paris* "expressed and reinforced…the laissez-faire liberalism of the upper bourgeoisie under the July Monarchy" (Tannenbaum 492). As the city mysteries genre is not considered canonical, there have only been occasional reprints of certain

issues, such as three works by George Thompson in *Venus in Boston*, (2002) and only *The Mysteries of Paris* remains in print.

The city mysteries novels depict "criminal underworlds, urban squalor, and elite luxury and decadence," a high level of disorder that the genre assumes to exist in the urban environment and which contributes to the difficulty of regulating normative behavior. (Denning 85). This assumption was shared by those who recently immigrated to the city from the countryside. The majority of those who swelled the populations of Paris, London, and New York City, were emigrants and immigrants from rural communities and many among them found the burgeoning cities threatening and disorienting when compared to their points of origin. The physicality of the modern cities was daunting as was the social environment where community cohesion was weakened due to a greater diversity of socio-economic classes, the anonymity of urban life and the dehumanizing effects of industrialization. This contrasted with the rural communities where external self- regulating behavior was encouraged through formal and informal institutional and social constructs. In small country towns the local church served as the central source of social and religious activity. If any behavior that was considered aberrant was performed, there was a close proximity to neighbors, extended family or pastors who could shame or punish offenders. There was often a primary economic engine through agriculture or in smaller communities children learned other skills from their parents, drawing families together in a united purpose. While the three cities examined in this thesis share historical similarities related to the growth of their major cities, the greatest detail will be paid to the example of Paris and France. Although the education offered in the countryside was scattered and rudimentary, it "concentrated on the task of instilling moral and religious values" (Heywood 202). Augmenting formal education and relieving arduous workdays were the annual festivals (*veillées*) in which storytelling played a

large part. Folktales, legends and myths were conveyed, forming a "basis for a moral education" (75). Public *charivaris*, loud, teasing serenades performed by local citizens, were also utilized to deride those stepping outside of local norms and unpopular politicians. Criminal behavior was monitored and deterred by municipal or regional *commissaires de police* and supplemented with state re-enforcement through the military presence of the *gendarmerie*. Whatever restraint that one might acquire before migrating to a large city becomes unduly tested with the combined diminishment of social support, fading institutional influence and the enticements of a city.

Many of these regulating structures were absent or weakened in the large cities of the 1830s-40s. The common bond that a church could form in towns and the countryside was harder to realize in large cities. In France the migratory waves were disproportionately comprised of those from regions where "religious indifference was highest" and the migratory process itself "often weakened religious habits" (Curtis 126). Even when religious faith unified immigrants, such as with the waves of Irish Catholic immigrants entering New York City in the 1820s-30s, it was also a source of tension, resulting in riots such as that which occurred in 1835 in the Five Points borough (Reitano 36). The Irish Catholics that were immigrating to London in large numbers were also perceived as a threat and the "'folk' Catholicism" of rural Ireland did not translate well to their new environs "and a high proportion of the immigrants lost all contact with the church" (Obelkevich 335). In London the intellectual and moral education, especially for the under-class who could not afford school or the absence of income derived from employed children was disrupted by the effects of industrialization. Children were required to work lengthy days throughout the year, which curtailed time for formal and informal education, and those who could attended schools that were overwhelmed with migrants (Heywood 213). While increases in the Parisian police force were made in the 1830s-40s, a study of French urban centers during this

period found a strong relationship between urban environments and "crimes against property and to certain crimes of collective violence" (Lodhi 313). Anecdotal evidence of the effects of losing external controls was prevalent in fictional literature (La Comédie humaine by Honoré Balzac, Les Mystères de Londres by Paul Féval and all other novels of the city mysteries genre) and contemporary personal accounts such as those by Fanny Trollope in *Paris and the Parisians in 1835*. When she saw common laborers amongst other classes at "the Louvre and the Tuileries garden," an unusual public display before the 1830 July revolution, Trollope expressed her concern by noting their presence as "external proof of the increased liberty of the Parisian mob" (Thompson 523). Those living in Parisian suburbs were adversely affected by the corrupting influence of Paris. Louis Chevalier writes in *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes* that the desires of young men who visited Paris were incited in ways that did not "inspire the taste for work and virtue" and women became "indolent and lazy…and [sacrificed] everything to their pleasures" (Merriman 46).

The newly arrived were also introduced to scenes on the street that assaulted the senses and intensified the feeling of disorder. Central Paris in the 1830's resembled a medieval city with twisting, dark, and narrow passages that were paved with manure and clogged with horse, carriage and foot traffic. In many cities thousands of hogs were openly penned or roamed free, scavenging through the refuse in the streets, with one estimate in 1820 "[suggesting] that there were 20,000 hogs in the settled parts of Manhattan" (McNeur 23). The stench of manure and animals was accompanied by the smell and presence of chimney smoke and the putrescence emanating from overflowing urban graveyards and "church vaults; [which]…drove away the regular worshipers from service" (Stolte 416). The streets of London provided a spectacle of people that, listed throughout his *London Labor and London Poor,* (1849) by journalist and

social investigator Henry Mayhew, included peddlers, chimney sweeps, young toughs, flower girls, homeless, food venders, laborers, costermongers, crossing sweepers, performers, and vagrants during the day and prostitutes and rag pickers at night (Mayhew).

With the political ramifications of the 1789 French Revolution still reverberating, the members of the bourgeois class were comfortable but a political trend was being forged through the unifying force of disenfranchised workers as demonstrated through the Canut revolts of 1831, 1834 and the 1848 insurrection. Writers and thinkers who had and were promoting social reform included Henri de Saint-Simon, who "argued for reason based…collaboration," Charles Fourier who promoted "social co-operation in large utopian communities," and among others, "[Pierre-Joseph] Proudhon's anarchist socialism" (Knight 25). Joining these thinkers was Eugene Sue himself who "emerged from [writing *The Mysteries of Paris*] a declared socialist" and some of the ideas within his novel influenced socialistic reforms (Denning 86). Sue became directly involved in supporting the workers during the 1848 February Revolution "which many felt had been inflamed by the social critique embodied in *Les Mystères de Paris"* (Knight 40). These works influenced public discourse and social, political and economic divisions were forming in an era of mixed alliances that sometimes spilled into the streets.

City mysteries authors depicted the problems that cities endured when their population growth exceeded the capacities of physical and social infrastructures in Europe, England and the United States from the 1830s to the 1850s. The populations of Paris and London more than doubled in the first half of the 19th century and quintupled in New York City. The results of this surge were such that the "systems of public order, moral order, health, [and] sanitation...were all at serious risk" and those especially affected were the newly arrived underprivileged and working classes who settled into squalid neighborhoods (Knight 6). These precincts either sat

adjacent to pockets of skilled laborers and the upper class or were within walking distance, a proximity that enhanced their disparities and tension. It was not "until the unavoidable and startling contrasts between classes of people and places that resulted from rapid growth were commonplace" that the mysteries novel could be realized (Humpherys 456).

Crime was one of the primary concerns for the general public, and while Paris had a lengthy history of suppressing crime and public rebellions, London had not created a metropolitan police force until 1829, New York City did not establish one until 1845. The English were suspicious of the French model of policing, believing their use of spies to be too intrusive however, this belief ran along class lines, as the "the middle-classes desired privacy for themselves, but wished the lives of the lower orders to be lived in the full blaze of publicity" (Olsen 275, 276). Before a police force was established in New York, the number of "night watchmen….was small and subject to political whim [and]….competence and professionalism were irrelevant" (Reitano 36, 37). A study of France during this period (1841-1851) did not find a strong relationship between the growth of cities and crime but that one is held between urban environments and "crimes against property and to certain crimes of collective violence" (Lodhi 313). In England, the idea that crime was "increasing alarmingly" between 1800 and 1850 was attached to "the notion that the moral condition of England was deteriorating" when actually, it was "the prosecution rate" and not crime that rose (Gatrell 250). In 1844 *Blackwood's Magazine* fed the public misperception of rising crime by claiming it was rising by "700 per cent" in England "because the restraints of character, relationship and vicinity are…lost in the [urban]crowd" (252). Whether they rose or remained stable while the city mysteries were published, urban crime rates were perceived by the public to be high, which is reflected in the ubiquitous menace of criminality found in the genre.

The sanitation of all three cities was another major public concern and the failure of municipal governments to address the issue led to the 1832 cholera epidemics. The epidemics were caused by the effects of the burgeoning populations which overwhelmed the capacities of sewer systems and cesspools and they highlighted the lack of adequate city water supplies. These deficiencies nurtured the belief that the growth of these cities was ungovernable and "emphasized the difference between the classes in society," as the poor and laboring classes were blamed for the outbreaks (Willms 209). Already stigmatized by common belief that the "great proportion of the lower classes" were criminals due to their inherent "depraved habits and loose conduct," the "poverty and misery [and]…prostitution" within their crowded houses was considered the cause of the epidemics (Gatrell 249, Willms 215). These allegations masked governmental negligence and the unwillingness of property owners to pay for modernizing city infrastructures. Rather than concentrating resources on the unglamorous task of updating the medieval Parisian sewer system and water supply, the prefect at the time, the comte de Rambuteau set aside funds for the beautification of the city (Willms 217). In New York City political affairs were also involved in hampering both the private and the public systems for clearing away the tons of garbage and manure in the streets (McNeur 96, 99). Despite the varying levels of effort made to ameliorate the sewage and water problems in cities, smaller outbreaks and another large cholera epidemic in 1849 occurred in their midst. While the true source of cholera was not discovered until 1849, the epidemics were a representative corollary to ineffective and corrupt governmental actions, societal division, and a pervasive anxiety and fear that urban environments were unmanageable and chaotic.

Significant populations of the poor and their neglectful treatment by those in political power, public institutions and society at large was another common theme addressed in urban

mysteries. The poor were considered to be of weak moral character and their impoverished condition could be attributed to bad habits…feebleness of mind…a lack of energy and purpose, a weak physique, and criminal tendencies" (Button 9). In England, an amendment to the Poor Laws was enacted in 1834 to "root out corruption and abuse" within the public relief system but as part of this effort was to "rationalize and to save money," it resulted in ultimately "[making] life more difficult for the needy" (Button 8). Work houses were used to shelter and rehabilitate the poor and was "the corner-stone of the English Poor Law system – an institution part penal, part alleviative….and anyone with a thread of pride avoided the 'house'" (Sheetz-Nuyen 21). Those not wishing to enter the workhouses could avail themselves philanthropic or religious organizations which made inroads in helping the poor but in the 1820s some "district-visiting societies…were difficult to sustain, given the challenges of the slums and the dangers they posed to the health of the visitors" (Button163). The diminishment of strong external regulatory forces and the rancorous class and philosophical distinctions exampled here, primarily through Paris and France, were repeated in different ways unique to London and New York City. These changes created anxieties about the insecurity and volatility in each city and underscore the difficulties in producing normative self-regulating subjects within their boundaries. These conditions and perceptions also provided material for the authors of city mysteries and a large readership that could fully appreciate their message.

The city mysteries genre portrays the impoverished in their squalor but no assumptions are made that poverty is indicative of a criminal disposition. Written in the "sunshine-and-shadow" tradition, city mysteries emphasize "the schism between 'two shadowy and corrupt worlds, one of the criminal underground, the other of the decadent elite,'" where no class barriers exist between those expressing criminal or amoral propensities (Steele 184, 185). The

vulnerability of the poor is often noted within the context of crime when, in *The Mysteries of Paris*, victims like the heroine, Fleur-de-Marie, and Maria, in *City Crimes* are pressed into prostitution. George Thompson inserts a digressive narrative about a prisoner who died in jail whose "only crime had been his poverty," placing the blame on "the damnable cruelty of the base hirelings of a corrupt government" (Thompson 216). Of those who have already entered into crime or wickedness within these two novels, there are wealthy characters exampled in the Franklin women, Mrs. Belmont, Jacques Ferrand, and M. de Saint-Remy. The wealthy protagonists are also culpable as Frank Sydney engages with a prostitute and unlawfully jails a man in his cellar while Rudolph de Gerolstein commits the extrajudicial blinding of Schoolmaster, a villain who also has an affluent past.

The cyclical nature of crime, vice and sin are emphasized in the genre with some authors offering solutions while others sensationalize for profit. The genre includes many "villains [who]…are motivated by the desire to accumulate both property and women" but the inherent nature of characters can vary with each author (Humpherys 458). There is not a single villain or depraved soul who either survives or is rehabilitated in the New York City that George Thompson creates, with only one criminal, the Doctor, recovering his scruples by establishing a medical practice in Boston. Sue distinguishes criminal activity and sexual aberrance by including recuperative paths for the former but not the latter, insinuating that sexual proclivities are more inherently derived. While Sue includes several incorrigible villains whose natures are carved into their physiognomies, he believes that "even the most criminal" female criminals possess "Love and Maternity" which "[lights] up here and there the profound gloom of a wretched corruption" (Sue 1004). These two qualities, found in even "the most detestable," speak to the essence of womanhood that must reside in a house to create a home (1004). Men do not have these

softening qualities but are creatures of passion whose viciousness "springs up from the mire of ignorance, of misery, and of stupidity" (1004). The Martial family is a criminal dynasty that best illustrates a "frightful inheritance in crime" (692). The grandfather, both parents and two of their children have all been involved in murder, compelling the conscientious eldest son to remove his younger siblings from the corruptive influence of the family and city. Rather than suggest that the source of brutality in the Martial family is genetic or cultural, Sue blames society for "not [interfering] to preserve the unfortunate" (692). These compassionate beliefs regarding criminality join other ideas by Sue in *The Mysteries of Paris* on prison reform, a model farm for improving the livelihood of honest workers, and a bank for the poor to reflect his budding socialist beliefs. There were a number of other prominent city mysteries authors who also expressed their socialist tendencies through their work, including G.M.W. Reynolds, George Lippard, and Augustine J. H. Duganne (Denning 86). Thompson exposed hypocrisy and injustice in every level of society but his success at becoming "the most shockingly sensational and openly erotic American writer of his day," spoke more to tapping into his readership for greater sales than any wish to edify (Reynolds xi).

The city mysteries genre exposes and explores the dark and negative space in cities that engender crime, vice and sin. In the old quarters of the city the constrictive, tangled streets and steep, spindly staircases are conducive to hiding and ambush, but these features only facilitate the criminal or vicious behavior that is formed by the social construct. The burgeoning populations not only produced a greater concentration of bodies with their needs and desires creating and supplying shortages but ideas that determined and undermined how people were treated and distributed. The darkness that the city mysteries explore is the product of the inherent inequities created in capitalist societies that cannot provide for all bodies and souls when

institutions designed for that purpose are fledgling or nonexistent. As people express behavior reflective of the lack of external regulation they create or go to spaces conducive to their actions and these spaces reinforce their habits and character, the cause and effect lost within their resonations. These spaces are hidden, dark, often underground, and others are right next door. Those seeking solace in God within the urban environment of the genre find themselves in a place where he is rarely mentioned outside of blasphemy or dying confessions and ministers are reduced by their hypocrisy. Those seeking justice find systemic corruption in the police on the streets, notaries, presiding judges and governmental institutions. Those seeking shelter, sustenance or compassion for body and soul find few or no homes that offer the physical security or a woman, if present, who is capable of ordering the space and imbuing it with her warmth.

Cities Through Space

Within this segment the space within each novel is explored, analyzed and compared to the characteristics that distinguish the model Victorian home from an inhabited apartment or house. This model would include a secure and healthy environment and the presence of a family, particularly a woman who is capable of providing order, loving warmth, and moral character. Without these features a dwelling is unable to fully withstand or becomes a contributor to the urban atmosphere that city mysteries authors create and determines the viability of normative spaces and their self-regulating inhabitants in each representative city.

City Crimes

George Thompson was a prolific author whose work included urban mysteries novels that depict the seamy elements of American cities in the mid-19th century. He wrote as many as one hundred novels but little is known of his personal life outside of that provided in *My Life: or the Adventures of Geo. Thompson*, (~1853) a putative autobiographical work filled with the same

hyperbole and caricature found in his novels. Thompson depicts his life as a difficult and adventurous rise from obscurity to fame through his own efforts and balances improbable scenarios with mocking assurances of their authenticity, a motif common to his novels. The most credible part of *My Life* is when he concludes with a promise to write "interesting, [and] exciting" work and that the intent of his hard labor is to produce fast and extensive sales (Thompson 378). His novel, *City Crimes,* (1849) likely did excite its readers with appalling revelations of crime, vice, sexual perversion and the corruption of those in the upper echelons of power. *City Crimes* was not a critical success but it purportedly sold well among its intended audience of those seeking lurid entertainment outside that of more conventional literature. As Thompson believed the public was curious to read about "the most repulsive-looking objects…which merely gratify a morbid and depraved appetite," he fulfilled their interest with *City Crimes* (Reynolds xxxiii). *City Crimes* is one of several novels that are considered highly derivative of the *Mysteries of Paris* by Eugene Sue and was written while demand for the genre was high (Denning 86). Taking advantage of such an opportunity is one reason Thompson wrote this novel, which is further supported by what one finds in the introduction and conclusion of *My Life.* In these segments he addresses his critics with a false modesty that typifies the cynicism with which he writes and sells his novels, with a winking acknowledgement that his formula is debased but lucrative.

Thompson wrote *City Crimes* using the thematic line of the urban mysteries genre by including several parallel plots revolving around the "criminal underworlds, urban squalor, and elite luxury and decadence" of New York City and Boston (Denning 85). Deep underneath the city streets of New York lie subterranean caverns known as the Dark Vaults where people live and criminals seek refuge and both use this site for "monstrous crimes and loathsome

wretchedness" (131). They can be entered from passages underneath the Read and Anthony houses and from a cellar in the Five Points neighborhood and it is by way of this last entrance that Sydney, masquerading as an ex-convict, is invited down. The journey begins with an "exceedingly narrow, dark and deep…. *forty-foot cave* [into]….the bowels of the earth" which leads to "a long and circuitous passage" (131, 132). The passageway enters into a large cavern with an arched, black brick ceiling supported by pillars and along the periphery of this space are smaller alcoves carved into the earth which are "swarming with human beings" (132). While passing by these smaller caves Sydney witnesses a man eating the putrefying carcass of a diseased animal and a drunken Irish wake. A large orgy occupies another cave in which hogs are joined by people of every age who are indiscriminately having sex with one another, including incestuous couplings that have produced children. These caverns adjoin the city sewers which serve as a graveyard and into which pigs fall and the city refuse is dumped, with many of the occupants subsisting on both. Through another long passage there is a large cave, called the Infernal Regions in which the Dead Man reigns over a gang of villains and where his wife and five year old son, Jack the Prig also come. In this space, the Dead Man "[trains] up [Jack] in the way he should go," catechizing him to "drink, lie, rob, and murder when necessary" and "die like a man upon the gallows" and believe that the Bible is "all a cursed humbug" (135). Another dark passage leading from the main cavern takes one to the Chamber of Death, a dungeon under the sewers where people are tortured and murdered. It has a "low iron door" that opens to stone stairs that lead down to a room with moldy floors and walls and has a "profound darkness" that a lamp can barely cut (253). There is a large round table around which are staged skeletons that are dressed and placed in "obscene and indecent" positions (253). Some of the skeletons belong to those who have died in the Vaults and others who were murdered, including "judges, magistrates

and police officers" (253, 254). After returning to the streets Sydney informs a magistrate about the Vaults so that the police can clear them out. The magistrate tells Sydney that they have raided the Vaults many times but it is futile as the villains escape through unknown passages and he would prefer keeping all of the other wretches "far removed from the community" (139). If the police placed them in almshouses and prisons, they would "impart their disease and pollution to those who are now healthy and pure" and the "vaults [are]…the moral sewers of the city - the scum and filth of our vast population accumulate in them" (139). The Dark Vaults are a breeding ground for every conceivable crime, vice and sin. The passageways have an "intense darkness" and the main cavern is a "mighty *tomb*" where "the sun never shone," creating a perennial night that negates fundamental dualities (132). Those dwelling here do not have the visceral aversion normally associated with gloomy, twisting, and crowded spaces but rather, seek them out to elude condemnation through anonymity. In this profound darkness and depth the behavior and its depravity in these caverns are essentially expunged as they are far removed from scrutiny or an objective sense of morality, extinguishing guilt and shame. It is with this state of mind that adults produce future generations through taboos and raise them under a catechism that is perverse yet, natural to the environment. Those dwelling here do not have the visceral aversion normally associated with dark, crowded spaces but rather, seek them out to elude censure through anonymity and the shared dilution of sin. These transformations from light to dark, morality to wickedness and order to chaos are concentrated in the Vaults and while they are filtered as they rise to the streets of this city, they remain.

The Franklin, Read and Anthony houses form part of the pervasive spatial iniquity of the city that is hidden from casual view. Mrs. Lucretia Franklin, a wealthy widow lives with her daughters, Josephine and Sophia, age 18 and 16, in an "elegant mansion in Washington Place,"

known as the Franklin House (156). Mrs. Franklin is a widow as she and Josephine, unbeknownst to Sophia, murdered Mr. Franklin two years prior so that they could indulge in voluptuous pleasures with countless partners. The chamber of Josephine has perfumes, cosmetics and a "superb mirror" resting on a dressing table, a "magnificent bed" for "riotous harlotry," a full-length, partially disrobed portrait of Josephine, a bird in a golden cage and well-bound, obscene books (158, 271). Behind a locked door another room is extravagantly furnished and behind silk curtains are naked, full-sized, wax automatons that when turned on, cycle through a variety of lewd motions (271). This room was used for "consummating their intrigues" and "[indulging] in extravagant orgies" (271). From a spacious mansion Thompson describes only those few articles and rooms devoted to prurient self-indulgence that sufficiently summarize the existence of mother and daughter. The sexual excess of the Franklin women stands in sharp contrast to the anticipated role of Victorian women as ordered and ethical guardians of the hearth. By subverting those upon whom society depends most for their moral bearings Thompson deprives the city of its anchor and casts New York adrift. Thompson sets the scene for murder and debauchery in a mansion within a genteel neighborhood as proof that wickedness is found in any given home, regardless of fortune or class.

Mrs. Belmont rents the Read house, a "neat three-story brick edifice" in anticipation of "[entrapping] some wealthy man into an amour or marriage" (187). To that end she lavishly furnishes it with "fine paintings…rich curtains…. [furniture] of the costliest kind…a magnificent piano…[and] a voluptuous bed" (189). There is a passageway in the basement to the Dark Vaults through a foundation stone "fitted so exactly, that the most critical eye could not discover it]" (208). The imperceptible entryway to the Vaults matches the illusion created inside the house to extort unsuspecting rich men. Resting upon the passage to an evil location is not incongruous

with the character of the house or Mrs. Belmont as she has committed dreadful acts and will herself fall victim to violence in the house.

The Anthony house is an "old wooden building" at the end of a "dark narrow court" with iron bars on the windows and a massive bolt on the door (197). The interior holds a crooked staircase, a bedroom for a child, a closet for counterfeiting money, and another filled with stolen goods "worth several thousands of dollars" (202). Below the house there is a damp, rat-infested cellar with a corpse and Image, a "human creature [that is] horribly and unnaturally deformed" who is locked inside of a cell, and a shaft and elevator that descends to the Dark Vaults and city sewers (202). The wife and young son (Image is another son) of the Dead Man live in this house into which the wife lures men so as to drug, rob or help murder them. The Anthony house is, as the wife says, an "abode of murder [and]…a charnel-house of iniquity" and the horrors of the Vaults have overflowed into the basement which the house does little to contain (200). The exterior of the house is unassuming other than it resembles a wooden coffin in a dark and narrow grave and the corpse in the basement supports this allusion. The iron-barred windows and bolted door repel intruders but in this tale they prevent the escape of Sydney, proving the house to be more of a prison than a safe home. The structure delineates what is considered to be a house and a home, as it securely shelters like a house and is home to an intact family but parental warmth is replaced by abject abuse with one child imprisoned and the chest of Jack the Prig tattooed with "a gallows, and a man hanging" (200).

At the end of *City Crimes*, Sophia Franklin and Frank Sydney become married and move into a "little rustic cabin" that lies "among the majestic mountains of Vermont" and near a "clear and quiet lake" (308). When they "approach the dark, mysterious shore" by boat in the evening Sophia imagines "a troop of fairy beings with bright wings" and on hot summer days she enters

the nearby forest where the trees cool her in "a soft delicious twilight" (308). Sophia is the younger daughter of Mrs. Franklin who, unlike Josephine possesses "an angelic placidity of temper and a sweetness of disposition" (156). She was sent away from the city early in the story and survived later attempts by her mother and Josephine in Boston to "sacrifice her to the lust of a rich villain, for gold" (274). She is the only surviving person in the novel who is pure and deserving of an idyllic home and space where she and Sydney might start a family far from the corrupting urban influence. As the antithesis of New York City this space is quiet, uncongested, has clean resources, and darkness is not used to conceal evil deeds and thoughts, but instead brings pleasant images and twilight is unambiguously soft and delicious. The interior of the cabin is not described as it is assumed that it will possess the qualities associated with a woman who will keep it ordered and imbue it and her family with warmth and normative values. When leaving his home every day Sydney will not degrade his character by entering the decadence of a city and can return to help reinforce the sustaining qualities of his wife.

In *City Crimes* every depiction of where wicked acts are committed or offenders live, die and hide are in enclosed or dark spaces and the criminals are the only ones privy to the underpinnings of the city – the corruption of the police, church and justice system and those places invisible to the average citizen. Despite walking above the Dark Vaults every day, their existence is only known by "very, very few citizens" and the obscurity of these caverns is comparable to the interior of houses on the street (139). The wealth from criminal enterprise within the Anthony house belies the humble exterior just as the Franklin mansion conceals a corrupt interior shared by both, with passerby unable to distinguish either. The Read and Anthony houses contain tunnels that lead to the Dark Vaults but as no space is allocated for virtue in this cityscape, they simply meld into the immoral continuum that Thompson has

constructed. The darkness of the Vaults is found behind locked doors in Franklin house, inside the closets and bedrooms of Anthony house, hidden in plain sight at Read house, and lingering in basements.

Underground spaces are not a fit place to raise children who need circadian rhythms that translate into the cadence of a life that distinguishes light from dark in all its forms. Houses that are above ground do not resemble homes either as the women who preside over them are depraved. In the absence of a husband, riches would normally empower women to take care of their families and contribute to society but in this city the Franklins come into their inheritance through murder and squander it through carnal excess. Every woman depicted in the novel, other than Sophia, has willingly or been forced to commit crimes, prurient acts or is murdered, depriving the city of either the space or the person who is essential for creating a nurturing and ordered home. The women of the city use sex and their allure for their own gratification or monetary gain and men take advantage of women for the same purposes, with neither interested in producing and raising families with normative values. It is best that children are never born as they suffer like the newborn that Mrs. Belmont murders and the appalling abuse that the sons of in Read house endure. The only hope offered to women, children and enduring families lies outside of the city limits from which Sophia and Sydney have escaped. One is relieved of the constricted urban environment when the mountain cabin is portrayed in the last pages. The perception of space expanding and relaxing comes not only through the absence of buildings but when violent and immoral excesses are replaced by the simplicity of regulated lives.

The Mysteries of Paris

In *The Mysteries of Paris*, (1842-43) Eugène Sue captures the dynamic coexistence of the impoverished and wealthy, the criminal and the elite in early nineteenth century Paris.

Recognized as the first novel in the mysteries of the cities genre, it depicts the "nature, complexity, threat, and possible control of…the modern megalopolis" (Knight 14). During this period Paris was experiencing a large migratory influx and these newly arrived filtered into those environments matching their social, cultural, and class identities and dispositions (Bourdieu 81-82). *The Mysteries of Paris* was an influential introduction of this Parisian collage to the world and a window into the evolving life of Sue. This was his twenty-first novel and was serially published in *Le Journal des Débats*, a conservative newspaper that allowed this integration of material, normally intended for "artisans and laborers," so as "to appeal to the bourgeois tourist's taste for the exotic" (Denning 85 Tannenbaum 493). The creation of such a diverse audience compelled Sue to be sensitive to the suffering of the poor while palliating the concerns of the wealthy. The original impetus for writing the series appears to have been purely monetary as Sue had "gone through two fortunes he had inherited [and]…to maintain his position in society and his fancy tastes" (Tannenbaum 492). The life of Sue contained the indulgence of the upper class, the pragmatic progressivism of the *grande* bourgeoisie and a conversion into active socialism, all reflected in his novel. Eugène Sue (Marie-Joseph Sue) was born into a wealthy family in 1804, his father a distinguished doctor and his birth attended by "Josephine Bonaparte, Eugène Beauharnais, [Napoleon Bonaparte's stepson] and…a high treasury official" (Tannenbaum 491). He was born into a turbulent age in which King Charles X was overthrown in the 1830 July Revolution and his successor, Louis-Philippe was deposed in the 1848 February Revolution. The working class was suppressed in two labor revolts (1831 and 1834) and suffered the most in two cholera outbreaks (1832 and 1849) and a major recession in 1846. Due to his socialist participation in this 1848 revolution, he was forced into exile for the remainder of his life in the 1851 *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon. Sue was proud that that his concept for an interest-free bank

for the underclass (Poor People's Bank) in *The Mysteries of Paris* was realized in Bordeaux and Lyon by "several rich and compassionate people" (Tannenbaum 505). By including several scenarios in the novel that were sensitive to the cyclical nature of poverty and crime and the diversity of humanity he further expressed his socialist tendencies. He realized that no comprehensive metric exists to capture the human condition and demonstrates this by contrasting and merging the innate qualities of his characters with the societal pressures that existed in early 19th century Paris and France.

With *The Mysteries of Paris*, Eugène Sue set the template for the city mysteries genre with its numerous concurrent plots revealing the sordid and dangerous places in Paris where people prey upon one another. These threads are connected by the protagonist, Rudolph, a wealthy philanthropist prince from the German state of Gerolstein. He is a single, white man who has "muscles of iron," a "tall, graceful, and perfectly proportioned" form, and the integrity and money to help the destitute and fight crime (Sue 3, 10). Just as Thompson characterizes his protagonist in *City Crimes*, Sue gives Rudolph the ability to disguise his body, affect and patois to enter and unveil every layer of society. The city of *The Mysteries of Paris* feels like it is simultaneously rambling and constrictive as several locations are featured but most are bound by potential threats. The spacious and refined indoor consulate gardens even feel like both a redoubt and a retreat when contrasted to the tense urban environment. One of the principle locations in the novel that Rudolph investigates is the apartment house at No. 17 Rue du Temple wherein the space and tenants provide a concise representation of Paris and the reaction of its citizens to their urban environment. All of the tenants share the exterior of this house and their response to the common threat of the outer world is reflected in the halls, stairwells, doorways, and the ordered and aberrant space of their apartments. Although the most heinous criminals do not live here they

have walked the halls and entered rooms, signifying the close proximity that exists throughout the city between the most innocent and loathsome.

The house at No. 17 Rue du Temple sits in a dangerous quarter of central Paris that is "the preserve of workmen, artisans and the poorest layers of society" (Knight 41). The exterior is "nothing very remarkable," with a cheap bar in the basement and with four floors topped off with garrets (Sue 185). A narrow alley leads to a small courtyard in the back with a dry well into which all the residents toss down their filth and garbage. Its nondescript features blend into this working-class neighborhood and while the location and low rates attract and retain those of little means, those who can freely move or choose to remain take advantage of the anonymity that it offers.

The elderly porter and housekeeper, Mr. and Mrs. Pipelet live and work at the bottom of a dark, damp stairway on the first floor in a single room that is blackened and begrimed by a smoky lamp (185). This gloomy "dungeon" has a bed with a patchwork quilt, tattered kitsch, including a small wax figurine of St. John, and numerous shoes and boots, designating Mr. Pipelet as a cobbler (Sue 186). Through their doorway, which remains open all day, they can see tenants and visitors pass by. As one shapes the other, the Pipelets and their lives conform to the lines of their home. The tiny room reflects their modest occupations and means and the filth and casual array of knickknacks bespeak a settled laziness, a sedentary existence broken only by the lives of others. Mrs. Pipelet is honest, but abrasive and she meddles in the affairs of other tenants and this habit matches the housekeeping she performs on their rooms while neglecting her own. Mr. Pipelet enjoins his work with a "serious and meditative air which [characterizes] all his doings" (Sue 469). The St. John figurine marks their Catholicism and their faith has contributed to their simple and honest characters and their open door denotes the frankness of lives that have

nothing to hide. The darkness, damp and filth of the room create an unhealthy space for body and mind. Their open door is dangerously close to the unlocked exterior door of the house and effectively turns their apartment into an outdoor space. Their only protection from the polluting influence of the city is their faith, the unforced simplicity of their lives, and the warmth of their marriage. It is through this candid naiveté that the couple proves to be a touchstone to the character of their fellow residents.

In the contemporary model often found in Europe for placing tenants, those with the highest social or economic standing are lodged on the first or second floor with each ascending floor reflecting diminished status. On the first floor a room is rented out to M. Charles Robert, also known as the Commander, an appellation that was obsequiously conferred upon him by a workman. Robert had this room completely refurbished with the finest furnishings, silk curtains and carpet to make it "as grand as a restaurant on the Boulevards" (Sue 191). His doorway stands out from the moldy walls with its fresh coat of paint "grained in imitation wainscot; a copper-gilt handle…on the lock, and a handsome bell-rope, with a red silk tassel" (Sue 209). Robert allows others to assume he is a military commandant under the title of Commander but he is actually only an officer in the Paris National Guard. He rents this room in a humble neighborhood and house in hopes of covertly carrying out an affair with a married marchioness. The money Robert used to pay for the refurbishment was illegally derived in shady speculations on the stock exchange and despite the large amount he spent, he is miserly with Mme. Pipelet on several small accounts (Sue 196). The ostentation of this room and doorway match the affections of the Commander. The falsity behind his aspirations to lure and degrade a married woman is displayed in the furnishings inside the room and the faux finish on the door and its handle. Robert does not live here but only arrives in anticipation of trysts and this emptiness and his intent designates this

space as morally unfit. The warmth and order of a woman is replaced by the base desires of a man and the sporadic housekeeping of Mrs. Pipelet. That honest and poor Mrs. Pipelet delights in his inability to consummate the affair speaks to their divergent displays of self regulation and worth.

The tenants who live on the second and third floor represent those in the building and the city who engage in criminal activity. Their close proximity to the other inhabitants in the house is disturbing as is their association with far more dangerous villains who frequently visit. It is out of necessity that these tenants have doorways that are both spatially obscured and revealing. On the second floor there is a door to an apartment over which is nailed a stuffed owl, a "bird [signifying the] cabalistic and symbolical" (Sue 209). The door has a small opening protected by iron wire, allowing the tenant to observe those who wish to enter. No detailed description is given of the interior of the apartment but the smell of sulfur, charcoal and melted lead sometimes emanates from her doorway. The tenant is Mother Burette, a fortune teller, pawnbroker and money lender who is rumored to "[deal] with the old one, (Satan) or practices magic" (Sue 199). She is gifted at reading fortunes and Tarot cards and by doing so "makes her weight in money" which allows her to afford a second floor apartment with at least two rooms (Sue 197). The owl is posted as a sign for those seeking her services and indicates the esoteric nature of what lies behind the door. The portal hole allows her to see through her door without disclosing her identity but this proves futile since a fellow criminal that she often admits into her apartment informs on her. She is arrested as "a fencess, melter-downess, shoplifteress, smasheress, forgeress, [and a] coineress" (Sue 876). Her door is both a portal and a confining barrier for thwarting the police, turning her apartment into an ersatz prison in which she serves as her own jailer. By filling her room with toxic chemicals and deviating from moral and judicial norms

Burette displays a contemptuous disregard for creating a nurturing space. Her door is completely permeable to the corrupting influence of the public space as her profession and character attract some of the worst Parisian criminals into the house and her room. She attempts to hide within the layered anonymity of living in a large city and a seedy neighborhood and house but her downfall comes through those who share her aberrant behavior.

The tenant on the third floor is similar to Mother Burette in character which is indicated by his use of uncanny and repulsive elements to adorn his doorway. Nailed to the door is a tablet with his name spelled out in horse teeth and the pull for the bell rope is a dried forearm of an ape, with the hand bearing the likeness to that "of a child" (210)! The teeth indicate that the occupant is a dentist and the repugnant bell pull is used to influence which person will approach the door. This apartment is also an office and is leased by M. Polidori, an Italian dentist who also mixes and sells drugs, some of which he uses to commit murder (Sue 891). There is a transparent bi-directional opening in the door that allows passerby to peer in but this is inconsequential as the visitors are the ones in need of security. Polidori does not share his apartment with anybody other than an apprentice, Tortillard, a malevolent boy who is complicit in a kidnapping and murder. Polidori created the macabre doorway as a fitting portal into a dental office where he prepares poison and employs a young but equally deviant reflection of himself. It is not possible for a woman to help amend his life and establish a nurturing home for the soul of Polidori is too deeply entrenched in the space of his own devising.

Rudolph temporarily rents an apartment on the fourth floor in an attempt to gain information from Miss Dimpleton, nicknamed Rigolette, an eighteen year old seamstress who lives in the adjacent apartment. He also uses this opportunity to fulfill his purpose of exposing the lives and space of those living in the house to the reader. On her door there is painted a

garland of flowers surrounding six cupids, each holding a different implement used by seamstresses and amidst them is painted "Miss Dimpleton, dress-maker" (Sue 211). On the inside of this door is a bolt so sturdy that it "would not have been out of place in a prison" (Sue 465). There are two large windows, two canaries in a cage, and "nothing could be gayer or better arranged than this little room" (Sue 463). This apartment has a carefree door as the painting is whimsical and the inclusion of a name and occupation is open and forthright. Large windows create a healthy environment by admitting light and air while remaining secure at such a height. The order and cleanliness of the room denotes the same discipline that is required to sustain a business. With the occupation, gender and marital status on the door it makes the room as easy to find for customers as for those who prey on young, single women. The substantial door lock conveys the vulnerability of solitary women in large cities, this borough and this house but is equal to the task, allowing admittance to only those she deems safe.

Rigolette had a tragic childhood but throughout her travails she maintained a good disposition, which currently helps her endure long work days in which she "[rises] at five o'clock, winter and summer [and]…goes to bed at ten or eleven" (Sue 477). Although the last three single men renting the room next door ardently sought her affections, Rigolette was too disciplined and independent to take a lover, preferring instead to work and support herself so she could fully claim her possessions and life (Sue 484). The painting on her door is not only the first introduction to the open nature of Rigolette but signifies her allure since it was painted by one of the men who once lived next door as a token of his love. Rigolette lives alone but dotes on her birds and while they do not constitute a family to complete the picture of domesticity in her apartment, she shares her life and exhibits the moral quality of caring for other living beings. Her windows provide her with a healthy environment which she orders and keeps clean, not allowing

the “mouldy antiquity of the [hall] walls” to enter into her space (209). The lock secures her door and room but without a husband she is compelled to enter the perilous world for her daily needs. Rigolette ordered and secured her room and life beyond what one could expect for one so young. These disciplined qualities are what make her proud and independent but also prevent her from seeking a husband and family. Until she allows them into her life and they find a commensurately larger space in which to live, Rigolette cannot claim to live in a home.

The fourth floor is the highest in which tenants can expect basic levels of comfort but those who are unable to afford these rooms are relegated to the garret (attic). The Morel family live here in dire poverty, as Mr. Morel must tend to his ailing wife, deranged mother-in-law, and five starving children, leaving little time for him to work and support them. He grinds and polishes authentic gems for a jeweler but must pretend that they are simulated stones to avoid being robbed. Madeleine, his wife, sometimes alludes to selling just one of the diamonds to rid them of all their ills, but his “honesty [is] so natural, so innate” that he cannot imagine she wants “to tempt his irreproachable rectitude” (Sue 437). This didactic approach to life blinds Morel to the subtleties of moral consideration and while the discipline he shares with Rigolette allowed her to produce a healthy and warm room, his intractable will helped create a deplorable space.

The last flight of stairs brings one up to a landing in front of an unhinged door, next to which is a storage closet with cracked walls through which anyone can secretly observe the apartment. The ceiling of their room is sloped to match the angle of the roof, through which the “wind…whistles through the tiles,” freezing the water in a jug (423). One slim, snow-covered window is mounted into this slanted roof, leaving only a single candle as the only source of light until the snow thins. The room is narrow and low, the walls black with age, and the floor strewn with debris, a wash tub, a thin mattress, and two straw beds. The unhinged door demonstrates

how bodily security is secondary to daily survival and the cracked walls compromise their dignity and privacy whenever somebody peers inside. The angled ceilings pressing down upon this slight room constrict a space already too small for eight people and heighten their feelings of entrapment. The darkness, lack of fresh air and filth pollute the room and the inability of the women to organize, clean or provide any human warmth make their conditions intolerable. The blinkered honesty of Mr. Morel aside, he is overwhelmed by circumstances beyond his control and he provides a moral backdrop through the loving care he provides his wife. His good intentions alone cannot sustain this apartment and its physical properties and absence of a feminine touch preclude it from being considered a home.

Since the front door to the No. 17 Rue du Temple house is unlocked the stairwells and hallways are essentially an extension of the street and the polluting outer world. This contamination is seen in the darkness and moldy walls of the hallways and the "filthiness of the staircase" (212). These passageways have experienced footsteps that, while invisible, tell stories within and beyond the bounds of this house. Pedestrian movements help one to understand the "*limits of the urban vision,"* the invisible quality of cities excavated by 19th century urban writers (Steele 185). The meaning and molding of a city is made through the qualitative remnants of people, the temporal and spatial traces of wandering, interrupting, mingling, meeting - every impetus or desire for taking steps. Those who have passed through the halls and stairwell of No. 17 Rue du Temple are representative of the interconnected lives of its residents and are tied by extension to the "temporal overlays, geographical disconnection, and social breaks" of the complex megalopolis (Steele 191). Every social stratum is represented in the transitory figures of the house but they share a commonality in their association with or an exposure to the criminal and aberrant world. Tortillard is the physically and morally disfigured apprentice of Mr. Polodori

who hobbles throughout the house, finding opportunities for committing crime. His father, Red Arm, often comes to the house with a cohort, Screech Owl, to fence stolen goods through Mother Burette. Prince Rudolph, Lady D'Harville, and the Duchesse de Lucenay represent the royalty and members of the upper class that have passed through. Bailiffs have climbed up the staircase to evict the Morels from their garret and the police sweep in to arrest Burette. Germain once lived next to Rigolette and is the son of an aristocratic mother and a murderous father. The entirety of these footfalls and their intersecting paths throughout the city form "an innumerable collection of singularities" that "weave places together" (Certeau 97). The criminal and seamy spheres are hidden from sight but their traces can be found in the interactions that these steps represent. These disparate lives form a nexus in one house and reinforce the perception that those who rent their homes are nowhere and everywhere at once. Nobody living at No. 17 Rue du Temple is committed to their rooms or the house and they resemble the silhouettes that once inhabited the space that they will invariably leave. The majority of people rented their dwellings in this period and when they moved they packed their furnishings and items unique to themselves and adapted them and their lives to a new location. Any change that occurs in the lives or the character of those who move is reflected in whatever new space they occupy and it is these values and habits, constant or not, that determine whether their new residence will be a home.

Bleak House

Of the fourteen novels that Charles Dickens wrote, only *Bleak House*, (1852-1853) is considered to belong to the city mysteries genre. The novel carries every mark of the genre other than the intense levels of licentiousness and criminal violence which are transmuted into institutional and moral corruption, urban pollution, and disease. *Bleak House* was serialized in

twenty installments and "it began a best seller and remained one" throughout its run (Dickens ix). Several critical reviews have been written, including one in the *Spectator*, by George Brimley in 1853, who finds it "both meager and melodramatic…and disagreeably reminiscent of that vilest of modern books…*Mysteries of London,*" another city mysteries novel by George Reynolds (Dickens 934). A more appreciative criticism is made in *Dickens the Novelist*, by Q. D. Leavis, who finds *Bleak House* to be "the most impressive and rewarding of all Dickens's novels," a belief similar to that of Dickens, who found it to be his second best work behind David Copperfield (Dickens ix). Dickens did not experience a dramatic political transformation as Eugène Sue did while writing his novel, but in *Bleak House* he made evident his "long standing…support of the sanitary cause," which he assisted through making speeches and writing articles (Stolte 416). Dickens was also engaged in the movement to reform the overcrowded and pestilential graveyards that dotted London. He used the existing Drury Lane Burying Grounds as his inspiration for the graveyard in which he buries the character, Nemo, and became active "in the campaign to shut these burial places down" (Stolte 416). It was also through personal experience that Dickens became involved with the Court of Chancery, which resolved cases involving "legacies, trusts, [and] mortgages" (Dickens xvi). The process of the court was notoriously slow and expensive as Dickens discovered after suing for copyright infringement and was forced to pay more than he would recover in damages (xvii). He vents his anger at the court with his portrayal of the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case and he also reveals the immoral actions taken by political and aristocratic bodies. Dickens provides human representation for these institutions but in *Bleak House* they remain largely faceless and beyond the purview of the general public. Litigants in the Court of Chancery who attend court proceedings hear disembodied witnesses through affidavits and are blind to the intricate

procedures that can take generations to percolate up to the Lord Chancellor. The length and cost of legal proceedings "[exhaust] finances, patience, courage, [and] hope" of a poor defendant and give advantage to the wealthy who have the "means abundantly of wearying out the right" (7). Just as the "grand principle [of English law] is to make business for itself at [the] expense" of common citizens, so too are politicians and the aristocracy obsessed with retaining and dividing power amongst themselves (482, 145). The pervasiveness of these corrupt entities is represented by a contagion that can touch every class in the city and countryside and the expansive reach of the Chancery is measured in "decaying houses…blighted lands in every shire [and a]… lunatic in every madhouse…its dead in every churchyard" (6, 7).

Pernicious social forces are often unseen but their effects are manifest in the psychological and corporal tolls they take, with the inescapability of the human body providing captive subjects. Architectural structures and space are the outer shells for these subjects, reflecting the symbolic and instinctual basis for their normative and aberrant behavior. The authors of *The Mysteries of Paris, City Crimes*, and *Bleak House* include subliminally charged buildings and space which facilitate a more intuitive understanding of the standard and deviant behavior of inhabitants. Thompson and Sue create perilous and polluted public spheres with lurking villains. Dickens creates equally harmful and invisible institutional forces and the degree to which they have seeped into dwellings and are countered by their inhabitants determines whether a household can be considered a home. This phenomenon is seen in the Krook, Rag and Bottle Warehouse, in which the owner embodies these harmful forces and those who rent rooms from him endure them as best they can. Another example is John Jarndyce, the owner of Bleak House who tries to evade the burden of the Chancery but the strain is telling in both his person and his house.

Krook, Rag and Bottle Warehouse "is called among the neighbours," the Court of Chancery and Mr. Krook is the owner and inhabitant who they call the Lord Chancellor (50). Krook is an elderly, alcoholic, and eccentric man whose white hair and whiskers and knotted skin make him look "like some old root in a fall of snow" (49). The facetious titles bestowed upon Krook and his warehouse are given because Krook "has so many things…wasting away [and]… old parchments and papers [and]….he can't bear to part with…or to alter anything" (50). Krook is an elderly, alcoholic, and eccentric man whose white hair and whiskers and knotted skin make him look "like some old root in a fall of snow" (49). Within view of his place is Lincoln's Inn Hall which serves the legal profession as do several others, lending the neighborhood a legal air but the shop is seen as "a dirty hanger-on and disowned relation to the law" (49). Advertisements are posted in the window for what Krook purchases but it appears that there is "nothing to be sold" (48). He buys bones, kitchen-stuff, old iron, waste paper, and clothing and in the window display are scores of dirty bottles, the majority of which are ink bottles and next to the entrance are old, tattered law books (48). Inside are used attorney book bags, stacks of old parchment scrolls and law papers, three bags of hair, a pile of bones, hundreds of rusty keys, and a heap of rags that were possibly once legal garments on a scale without a counterweight (48-49). In the back of the shop there is a fireplace and a table and chairs where Krook drinks liquor and sleeps. There are rooms for rent on the second floor and in the garret.

The stationary, cyclical nature of what Krook buys and stores is comparable to the obfuscating redundancies of the Chancery. The rags, old parchment and documents that could be recycled to produce new linen paper sit dormant, the ink bottles are spent and the keys gather rust. The officious attire of the self-serving legal profession, even when reduced to rags, outweighs the blind balance of justice. Many people die, commit suicide or become

impoverished while awaiting a verdict from Chancery, and as the bones in the shop are "picked very clean," they were symbolically rendered by the court (48). The sole companion to Krook is an omnivorous, aggressive cat that he trained to attack and that has "[licked] her lips" in an apparent interest in the cadaver of a tenant (130). Krook is illiterate and has attempted to teach himself to read for twenty-five years so he might understand and discover something valuable amongst his documents. This resembles the true Lord Chancellor who is unable to fully grasp intergenerational cases but can appreciate the hidden profit of their procrastinations. He presides over the Chancery Court where evidence, depositions, paper, legacies, money and lives are taken in, haphazardly sorted and filed, with no intent for quick resolution, a consuming body that produces nothing of value. As one who only lives to absorb and inhale rent, the detritus of courts, and alcohol, Krook is also a consuming body, with his "cadaverous and withered" body defying his intake while defining his self-immersion (49). Mr. Krook ultimately becomes an inextricable part of his shop – as a burned spot on the floor and a greasy coating and ash on the walls and ceiling - after his body vaporizes by spontaneously combusting (402-3). It is then that Mr. Krook truly embodies the allegorical blend of his shop and the Chancery, just as the actual Chancellors are indistinguishable from the courts "where false pretenses are made" and within which they perpetrate their lawful crimes (403).

The room on the second floor rented by Nemo is small, black with filth, and has a chimney, a cheap table, a broken desk stained "with a rain of ink," and opium taints the air (124). Stained, broken shutters cover the windows. There are two chairs with one supporting a suitcase with a few clothes and pawn tickets in it, a worn mat and a bed with assorted, ragged cloth for bedding and the corpse of Nemo. Nemo (Latin for no one) is a mysterious figure who was the father of Esther Summerson, who was conceived out of wedlock, and was an army officer (Capt.

Hawdon) before becoming a legal scrivener and opium addict. Signs of his decline in life and his death are found throughout the apartment. The small, black room resembles a closed crypt in anticipation of his death. The shabby suitcase, in lieu of a dresser, denotes an impoverished and peripatetic life that either instigates or is due to his addiction. The pawn tickets are proof that his money and possessions ebbed away and his pseudonym suggests the anonymity of a desolate life. What one discovers about his character is that he worked diligently as a legal copier, hence the ink-stained desk, was kind to Jo, a street sweeper, and was loved well by Lady Honoria Dedlock, the mother of his child. Before his identity is revealed his corpse provides more of a thematic and social commentary than his life and provides Dickens an opportunity to relay the dire condition of London graveyards. He is interred as a pauper in a very shallow grave and his coffin is so tightly wedged amongst others, the gravediggers "[stamped] upon it to git it in" (202).

Miss Flite is the elderly woman who rents the garret. She has 26 caged birds which have all been repeatedly replaced as they expire and they are symbolically named for aspects and victims of the Chancery Court i.e. Hope, Joy, Precedent, Jargon (180). It is a clean, large room within sight of Lincoln's Inn Hall but "very, very bare" (53). Some pictures of legal professionals adorn the walls and six handbags and work-bags filled with documents are present. The hearth is empty and there are no clothes or food and only enough dining articles for one person. Flite has been entangled in a Chancery case for many years and makes daily appearances at the court. These obsessive appearances are the reason for her proximity to Lincoln's Inn Hall and her poverty is likely a factor in renting a garret from Krook. The waves of birds that have passed through her cages represent the generations and lives of people who have also died or have been virtually and literally imprisoned while waiting for a decision in their case. Flite is a

victim of the Court of Chancery and her years of deprivation are reflected in her ascetic life and have contributed to her character (and eccentricities) as is indicated by her seeking a just ending to the case. As it is a high, spare space with a birds-eye view of Lincoln's Inn Hall, the garret resembles a birdcage for Flite. This image is sustained by her chirpy, flighty personality and her domesticated, submissive habit of attending the Chancery court proceedings, flitting between two symbols daily. Far from the center of London, John Jarndyce subtly expresses his suppressed anxieties through his house while Flite is in the literal shadow of her distress and her room gives stark testimony to her monomania.

The Rag and Bottle Warehouse is where Krook exists, the meaning of his life having long been translated into a negative relief of the power that the Chancery represents. The clutter of his shop and house reflect his consuming selfishness and slovenly habits which are beyond the redemptive help of a woman and explains why his only relationship is with a vicious cat. Krook possesses mounds of warehoused symbols of ruined souls and rental space for unknown, transient lives and neither offer the moral constancy required for a home. Nemo enters the story after an opium overdose, likely the result of the haunting loss of a potential loving family and home. Flight and her room offer the closest conditions in this building for the semblance of a home. She has a close relationship with her birds and she keeps a clean room but her court case has reduced her mental health and financial resources which, combined with the absence of a family prevents her from claiming a home.

Bleak House belongs to John Jarndyce, a wealthy, philanthropic man in his late fifties, who in the beginning of the novel invited his cousins, Richard Carstone and Ada Clare, and a companion for Ada, Esther Summerson, to live here. The house was named and once owned by his great-uncle, Tom, who was a defendant in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case that was being

processed at length in the Chancery Court. He became madly obsessed over the case and let Bleak House drift into dilapidation before committing suicide and John Jarndyce renovated the house and moved in (89). He has been a party to the Jarndyce case for years and although he tries not to dwell upon it, the strain is still evident. He helps many deserving people but he also supports many who are not which reveals an inability to distinguish character, including his own. Jarndyce is blind to his highly inappropriate behavior in developing a romantic relationship with Summerson. He is much older than she is and as he is her legal guardian and sole source of support and he abuses his position of trust when he proposes marriage (537). These anxieties and character flaws have become engrained in the architecture and space of Bleak House and reveal more than Jarndyce admits to himself.

The house sits on top of a hill in the windy countryside, 19 miles north-west of London in St. Albans. It has three peaks on the façade and a circular drive that leads to the front porch. It is an "irregular" house with several staircases, leading up and down to rooms, halls and passageways, and unforeseen rooms (Dickens 62). The room chosen for Summerson is an "older cottage-[room] with…lattice windows and green growth pressing through them" and has a pitched ceiling, an irregular shape with several corners, and a chimney. Jarndyce has a simple bedroom with a window that perennially remains open every night, and the only furniture is a bed, which sits in the middle of the room, and adjoining this room is a small bathroom (63). From this bedroom, through one door ("every room has at least two doors") one descends the back staircase, and from another door, down a few stairs to the hall, leaving you "wondering how you got back there, or had ever got out of it" (63). Another bedroom is "all flowers" in needlework and brocade and there are "pincushions and scent-bottles" displayed elsewhere (63). The furniture throughout the house is outdated and quirky, as is the eclectic assortment of wall

and table décor which are fastidiously arranged and wherever a drawer exists, it contains "rose-leaves and lavender" (63, 64). There is a small room adjacent to the bedroom of Jarndyce that contains a small library and several boots, shoes and hat boxes.

Bleak House has a troubled history and while Jarndyce renovated away many of the architectural "signs of [Tom's] misery," remnants remain (89). The dual character of Jarndyce as publically benevolent and privately disturbed is expressed in several ways throughout his house. Much like the public image of Jarndyce as a philanthropic, kindly man, the groomed exterior and grounds of the house are perceived as "a light sparkling on the top of a hill" (Dickens 59). While located in the countryside, away from the disease and filth of the city, and above the London fog atop a hill, the interior design of the house is as inconsistent as the behavior of its owner. Jarndyce maintains a spare bedroom and an open window which are conducive to uncluttered thought which is juxtaposed to the small room adjoining his bedroom, named the Growlery. It is "the best-used room in the house," and appears to be a placid space but he maintains it as a refuge for venting his ill "humour" (87). This inclination to brood is also glimpsed in his allusions to the easterly wind, which give him an "uncomfortable sensation now and then" and causes him to mumble distractedly (61). These winds come from London, upon which not only pollution is carried but associations with the Chancery and the Jarndyce case. Although he has spent many years agonizing over the court process that is "a country-dance of costs and fees and nonsense and corruption," Jarndyce insists to himself that "it won't do to think about it" (89)! His continual suppression of anxieties over the case makes Jarndyce dependent upon his Growlery which necessitates its existence, a relationship that fosters a perpetual cycle of unhealthy habits.

There are many dualities expressed in the interior of the house that mimic the conflicting rational and emotional boundaries of its owner. The abundance of feminine fabric flowers and drawers filled with aromatics contrasts with the awkward, masculine adornment and furnishings. Each room has at least two doors which allow every room (or the entire house) to become a portal and indicate a double nature. There is a large assortment of incongruent baubles and ornaments throughout the house that Jarrndyce ensures are meticulously arranged. He has Summerson become the housekeeper and she is given a large number of household keys for "the presses [clothing and linen cupboards] and things" (65). Summerson is permitted access to his wardrobes, which are "veritable organs of the secret psychological life," an "*intimate space"* where the "center of order… protects the house against uncurbed disorder" (Bachelard 78, 79). As a "methodical, old maidish sort," she quickly learns to navigate the house and Jarndyce believes she will bring order to the irregularity of his private life, allowing him to "abandon the Growlery" (Dickens 85, 90). Her bedroom has many corners which are spaces of "immobility," and while they can be comforting for occupants, their restrictive nature matches the amorous intent that Jarndyce holds for her (Bachelard 137). Although Jarndyce does not ultimately engage in the aberrant behavior stemming from his dalliance with Summerson, his initial advances and marriage proposal renders him a muddled character and the moral integrity of Bleak House suffers for it. He attempts to rationally disengage from the Chancery case but he is emotionally distraught and whatever he is unable to resolve in his Growlery symptomatically spills over into the rest of the house. Bleak House sits far from the polluting influence of London and while it is not a property of the suit, it bears the marks of the extensive influence that the Chancery wields. Despite the harm that the Chancery inflicted upon Jarndyce the house remains a symbol of the

assistance given by individuals across the country against the tide of institutional and societal neglect.

There is a second Bleak House out in the country that is introduced in the final pages of the novel and contains the same symbolic meaning as the cabin in the parting scenes of *City Crimes*. It is an idyllic "rustic cottage of doll's rooms," nestled among orchards, meadows and fragrant growth (751). After reconsidering and finding that his marriage proposal to Esther Summerson was unsuitable, John Jarndyce ensures her match with the good doctor, Allan Woodcourt, and buys this home for them. They have a family and reminiscing seven years later, Summerson notes that in her new home she has "never known the wind to be in the East" (769). Both Bleak Houses are in the countryside and one is inhabited by Summerson and her family who provide most of the characteristics required for a home and neither she nor her husband is afflicted by any of the institutional or societal woes emanating from London. The court case is resolved in the last passages and Jarndyce is relieved of his anxieties associated with the Chancery. Since he has also become aware of his inappropriate affection for Summerson, Dickens gives Jarndyce a redemptive chance to convert his Bleak House into a home while most other characters who remain in London are not given that opportunity.

Conclusion

The three city mysteries novels examined here are as reflective of their authors as the genre they represent. The thematic principles established by Eugène Sue are present and the imprint of each author is readily discerned by the cities they create and their portrayals of those engaged in crime, vice, and sin. In *City Crimes* George Thompson remains true to his sensational intent and the nominal expectations he holds for his readers by transforming New York City into a space that is incapable of sustaining either a virtuous body or soul. As every promising subject

for the Victorian model of a home is morally degraded, murdered or exiled in his novel, Thompson essentially impugns the urban space itself for the behavior of its populace. By creating this uniformly nightmarish cityscape, Thompson elides any space for the daydreaming that Gaston Bachelard believes is essential for the well-being of the soul. Writing solely to the prurient desires of his readership, Thompson invents a city that lacks a spatial tension between the standard and deviant, trading dynamic urban space for a flat succession of lurid interruptions. The least literary of the three novels examined here, *City Crimes* illustrates the potential depths of moral depravity within the genre and how the complete absence of a Victorian home diminishes the significance of the story.

Eugène Sue wrote *The Mysteries of Paris* for the same financial reasons as Thompson but, unlike his American counterpart, he evolved through his writing and incorporated social theories into his novel that were translated into French society. Sue constructs a Paris with more dimension than Thompson affords New York City by including prospective enclaves of normalcy which are few in number, thereby accentuating the broad swaths of iniquity. Fear and anxiety spatially constrict most of Paris but small pockets are relieved through redemptive portrayals of villains, the hallowed presence of Fleur-de-Marie and the ordered space of Rigolette. By the end of the novel several criminals remain in Paris while most of the normative characters leave but Sue also establishes households, including those of Rigolette and the Morel family, which will become Victorian models for homes. This mixture of criminal and normative households remains unbalanced but by removing Rudolph de Gerolstein, Sue places confidence in those who inhabit these homes to convey their principles beyond their doorways. These inhabitants represent the evolving socialist tendencies of Sue for by removing the sole character

that resolves social injustice the author replaces the power of the lone patrician with that of the people.

Charles Dickens creates a London that does not contain the level of criminality or vice of Paris or New York City but the threats therein prove more expansive. Whereas Thompson and Sue can send their protagonists into the countryside where they are ensured a secure and virtuous home, Dickens cannot guarantee a safe refuge anywhere in the country. London represents the center of a malignancy from which a corrupt court and political system, the aristocracy, and social apathy spread. *Bleak House* distinguishes itself from other city mysteries by randomly dispersing the misery associated with these entities beyond the city limits thereby dissipating the oppressive confines of a city. The immediacy of a dagger, often found in *City Crimes* and *The Mysteries of Paris,* is not found in the London of Dickens, who replaces sensational spaces with allegorical representations of threat. While Mr. Krook and his shop are mundane they signify a soulless being and an inhuman institutional process that takes and ruins several lives. More politically staid than Sue, Dickens provides a more relaxed London and England which exemplify Chartist reforms versus revolutions. This historical trend is borne out in the novel where the power of the Chancery and aristocracy begin to recede in the last chapters which indicates that of the three authors, Dickens creates the most optimistic setting for the future establishment of Victorian model homes.

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